

## IN DEFENCE OF THE SULTAN.

### ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS PRESENTS HIS SIDE OF THE CASE.

#### NOT A RELIGIOUS DESPOT—MANY CHRISTIANS AND ARMENIANS IN THE TURKISH GOV- ERNMENT—THE ARMENIAN REVOLU- TIONARY BUREAU.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I am aware of the fact that no one who is desirous of winning public approval can hope to benefit himself by raising his voice in defence of Turkey at this time, when the press and public of the country are ringing with denunciations of the Sultan and eloquent appeals in behalf of the Armenians. But I have always entertained the belief that Americans are pre-eminently lovers of truth and fair play, and are not easily deceived by plausible attempts to play upon their sympathy and generosity. It is the faith I have in the broad liberality of my countrymen that prompts me to offer to you and them a few facts which may be of interest at this time and which may be readily verified by any one who will have interest enough in the subject to do so.

The cable dispatches to the daily press seem to justify the anathemas which are heaped upon the Sultan and his government. We are told that he is the most brutal, fanatical and intolerant of sovereigns; that he hates the Christian with all the force of his fierce nature and is never happier than when issuing an order for the shedding of their blood. But those who charge him with intolerance do so upon the testimony of his bitterest, most relentless enemies and without being aware that there is ample evidence, easily obtainable, of the gross injustice of the accusation. It he were as broadly intolerant as he is described, the most natural course for him to pursue would be to exclude all Christians from his government offices and fill them with Mahometans. It is a fact that more than one-half of the Turkish diplomatic and consular offices are filled by Christians. The late Turkish Consul-General in New-York, Baltazzi Effendi, was a Christian; his successor, recently appointed, is a Christian; the Turkish Minister at Washington, Mavroyeni Bey, is a Christian and so is the Consul-General at Boston. Is there a Christian government that has ever given one of its diplomatic or consular appointments to a Mahometan?

#### CHRISTIANS IN THE STATE OFFICES.

But let us go to Constantinople, the seat of the government, and examine the government offices there. We shall find that in all the departments of state Armenians abound as well as Greek and Catholic Christians. For example: The director of the Foreign Correspondence Department of the Ministry of War is an Armenian. The chief of the foreign correspondents at the great artillery foundry, Tomik Conyoumdjian Bey, is an Armenian. Yahami Bey, president of the Court of Appeals of Constantinople, is an Armenian. The president of the Second Chamber of the Tribunal of Commerce of Stamboul is an Armenian. At the Ministry of Finance among the many Armenians holding important posts are Bedroc Bey Kerestitjian, director of the Translation Office and chief of the Foreign Correspondents; Ohannes Bey Sakiz, Procureur Imperial, and Ussup Bey, Director of the Mint.

In the ministries of Public Works and Commerce Armenians are employed in large numbers. Among them are Kevork Bey Pacarade, director of one of the most important offices; Aram Morgessian Bey, Central Commissioner of the Railways of Anatolia, and Mamigonian Bey, Imperial Commissioner for the Damascus roads. Among the Armenian chief engineers of vilayets are Boghoc Bey, of Aleppo; Khandanian Bey, of Kossoro; Khorassan Bey, of Salonica, and others. In the Ministry of Police there are Artin Bey Khandanian, director of the Passport Office, and Mighirditch Bey Tutundjian, Inspector, both Armenians. The Prefect of Constantinople is also a Christian—I am not positive whether he is an Armenian or not. H. E. Artin Pacha Ladian, an Armenian, is Under-Secretary of State, or Mustecher, for the Foreign Office. H. E. Gabriel Bey Noradounghian, an Armenian, is Legal Counsellor of the Sublime Porte; H. E. Nician Bey, Director of the Office of the Foreign Press, is a Christian, as are the following: Kirkor Hidir Bey, Director of Accounts of the Ministry; Ohan Effendi, Director of the Office of Nationalities; Hatchik Bey, Director of the Office of Telegraph Codes; Papazian Simon Bey, Secretary Office of the Foreign Press; Mikael Effendi Gullabian, Secretary-Interpreter of the Ministry.

I think it is unnecessary to prolong this list; it is long enough to show that there may be at least a shadow of justification for the suspicion that the Sultan in dealing with his subjects does not consider the question of religion at all. There are Greeks and Mussulmans connected with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but as a matter of fact the control of this department of the Government is in the hands of Armenian Christians; and it is by the course of this ministry that Europe and America judge the Turks.

It is said that the Turks are now disposed to regret their liberality toward the Armenians, for the posts they occupy in the Ottoman Government are exactly those that can be made to serve them to betray and annihilate it—assuming, of course, that they should happen to be so disposed. An Egyptian journal lying before me at this instant says:

Of all the Ottoman Sultans he who now reigns has most favored the Armenians. He has always regarded them as his most faithful subjects, the most worthy of protection. He has covered them with favors, with gifts, with medals, with distinctions of all kinds. In his palace he has given them the most delicate functions, those that demand the utmost fidelity and self-denial. Thus the Minister of the Civil List is an Armenian, H. E. Mikael Pacha Portocal.

#### SOME FIGURES AS TO POPULATION.

But permit me to call your attention to another very significant fact. The population of the twelve vilayets of Asia Minor may be classified thus:

Mussulmans (Turks, etc.)	4,732,380
Kurds	1,644,980
Armenians	162,000
Other peoples	144,000
Total	8,333,220

In the seven vilayets of Trebizond, Sivas, Erzeroum, Angora, Van, Diarbekir and Bitlis, forming the country called Armenia, there are:

Mussulmans	5,733,750
Armenians—Gregorians	547,710
Armenians—Protestants	90,784
Armenians—Catholics	68,471
Greeks	352,932
Nestorians	62,000
Chaldeans	41,400
Jacobites	51,258
Syrian Christians	9,081
Yezidees	9,442
Copts	372

"How is it," asks the "Egyptian Herald," "that all the Christians except the Armenians can live in peace and friendship with the Mussulmans? And how is it that the Armenians are subject to religious persecution and all the others escape it? And how is it that these other Christians have never yet joined themselves with the Armenians, either openly or secretly, in any of their agitations?"

To answer these questions would put me in the position of taking sides with the Turks against the Armenians, and my present purpose is only to state facts and leave your readers to draw their own conclusions. Your readers will probably remember what befell the good Admiral Kirkland when he came home and told the church people of Boston the truth about the foreign missionaries. Perhaps it was because he lost his patience and called them a "bad lot"; at all events, as a writer in "The Boston Traveler" says, "they pitched into him with all the fury of a Salem witch-finder or a mediaeval heresy hunter." Therefore I'll take warning and

let the missionaries alone, although they constitute a very important factor in Turkey's troubles.

#### THE TEACHING OF THE KORAN.

We are told that the Armenian Christians frequently receive their choice of becoming Mussulmans or having their throats cut. Also, that no Mussulman in Turkey dares to become a convert to Christianity, as it would be followed promptly by his death. The absurdity of these declarations is calculated to cause a Mussulman to smile. It is an accepted fact that the average Mussulman holds the Koran in the most profound reverence as the word of God and his guide in life. All Islamic laws and customs are based upon the precepts of this book, and its direct commands and admonitions are held as inviolable by all classes. The Sultan of Turkey, the Caliph of Islam and the recognized head of the Islamic fraternity of the world, would be the least liable to violate its commands or permit their violation within the limits of his dominions. Here are two quotations from the Koran:

Sura x, verse 99—Let there be no forcing in religion; the right way has been made clearly distinguishable from the wrong one.

Sura ii, verse 257—If the Lord had pleased, all who are on the earth would have believed together; and wilt thou force men to be believers? No man can believe but by the permission of God, and He will pour out His indignation on those who will not understand.

We ought to be very careful—that is, those of us who really desire to know the truth and to act justly—how we accept without question all that appears in the cable dispatches to the press concerning the Turkish situation. We should bear in mind that a committee of Armenian revolutionists are in London for the sole purpose of arousing public sentiment against the Turkish Government and in favor of their cause. It is by no means impossible that they may have methods and opportunities by which they may, at least, color some of these cable dispatches. Those who are familiar with the inside workings of both sides are clearly convinced that some Armenian influence is at work on the wires.

Almost every one knows of the "Bulgarian atrocities," as our journals like to call them, in 1876, when the fanatical and intolerant ravings of Mr. Gladstone caused the murder of over a million of the peaceful and industrious Turkish people of the Balkans by Russian and Bulgarian Christians. They were outraged, tortured and slaughtered ruthlessly, and the horrors of that event stand almost unrivalled. How did it come about? Let a Bulgarian revolutionist tell the story:

"We were too weak to gain our independence in any other way, or by fighting the Turks directly, so we had to resort to strategy; and it was desperate strategy, too. Our plan was to provoke an attack from the Turks and then call upon Christian Europe for help. We arose and burned village after village until we had marched clear to the Balkans. Everybody in our path was slaughtered and every house burned. The horrors of that march make me sometimes ashamed to call myself a Bulgarian. Of course, the Turkish troops came to crush us, but the cry of religious oppression had already been raised, and Europe was aroused to the necessity of protecting the Christian Bulgarians, who were being massacred by the Moslem Turks—the cruel Moslem Turks. Well, we gained our end, but oh! at what a cost!"

Religious prejudice is a powerful factor, but it must be nursed and handled with great care. The Bulgarians used it skillfully and successfully, but they swam through a sea of blood. The question that occurs to me at this moment is: Are the Armenians as clever diplomats as the Bulgarians?

#### TURKEY'S WAR FORCE.

There is another important fact that truth-loving Americans should know. Our people are running away with the idea that all that will be necessary to wipe Turkey off the map will be for an English or Russian gunboat to fire a shot or two at Constantinople. But Turkey is not "the sick man of the East," as some of our meagrely informed writers love to say. In case of war she could show an active army of 350,000 men, a reserve force of 450,000, and a territorial army of 200,000. With a million men in the field, with 1,512 campaign and 330 mountain pieces, she would manage to make matters interesting to a foreign foe, for a few minutes, at least. In 1888 an English firm received a contract from the Ottoman Government to furnish the latter with 500,000 repeating rifles for the infantry and 52,000 for the cavalry, and nearly all these weapons have been delivered.

I have a letter written by an English Moslem, now residing in South Africa, to "The Transvaal Advertiser," in which he says:

During a pilgrimage to Mecca, and a subsequent quarantine in the vicinity of Mount Sinai, I had, myself, an opportunity of judging of the calibre of the Turkish soldier and the Egyptian recruit. The former is acknowledged to have no superior, while the latter has in him the making of a tough article for desert warfare.

The Sultan of Turkey is well known to be an able ruler and administrator, beloved and respected by his people and warmly acknowledged as the head of our religion by some 300,000,000 followers of the Prophet Mahomet. His weekly journey from his palace to the mosque, amid the huzzas of the thousands of soldiers and the prayers of the populace who line the streets, together with his subsequent return, almost unattended, and often driving his own horses, will, I deem, be sufficient to dispel any anxiety concerning his "fear of assassination."

I am inclined to regard the position of Turkey today as a strong and safe one, and far from trembling in the balance. The French have the permanent influence in Turkey, their language being considered next in point of commercial utility to the Turkish in Turkey and the Arabic in Egypt. As a political move, a Mahometan mosque is about to be built in Paris for the use of visiting Mussulmans. The followers of the Prophet are being courted by France and their friendship played up to. Russia, again, is not likely to be an aggressor. Her lately acquired friend, China, has some 70,000,000 of Mussulmans within her borders. In European Russia is also a large Mussulman population, who have already refused to bear arms against Turkey. It may also be pointed out that Afghanistan is a distinct Mussulman country, so the Czar has little to gain at this period by a war with Turkey.

The Turkish Empire may one day be dismembered, but, I venture to say, not without a fight, during which the millions of Islam will have to be reckoned with.

The foregoing facts should be carefully considered before Americans begin to clamor more loudly for Turkish blood. The Armenians have never been oppressed by the Turkish Government, nor have they been massacred or even persecuted on account of their religious belief, and no one is better acquainted with this fact than are the members of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee in London, who are the prime movers in this unholy agitation. In view of all the facts, the patience and forbearance manifested by the Sultan toward his turbulent Armenian subjects are most wonderful, and entitle him to the plaudits of the Occident, instead of its condemnation.

MD ALEXANDER RUSSELL WEBB.  
Ulster Park, N. Y., Dec. 17, 1895.